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13 March 2023

BMW Motorrad presents the R 18 B HEAVY DUTY. Stunning custom bike by customizing icon Fred Kodlin.



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Munich/Borken/Daytona. Anyone who talks about the US customizing scene mentions Fred Kodlin almost in the same breath. For more than 40 years, he has dedicated himself to customizing motorbikes, from radically modified creations to sophisticated new designs. Since the 1990s he has been incredibly successful with his custom bikes and was able to win various important Daytona shows regularly. He was the very first non-US citizen to be inducted into the Sturgis Hall of Fame.

For the first time, Fred Kodlin has now set about customizing a BMW together with his son Len - the BMW R 18 B.

"The R 18 B HEAVY DUTY was a real father-son project. There was a lot of creative input from Len which also goes to show that the next generation at Kodlin Bikes is already in the starting blocks," says the boss of Kodlin Bikes in Borken happily.

Company
Bayerische
Motoren Werke
Aktiengesellschaft

Postal address
BMW AG
80788 Munich

Telephone
+49 89 382-0

Internet
www.bmwgroup.com



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Massive R 18 B chassis technology adaptations. Modified frame and air suspension.

The biggest challenge in customizing this year's crowd puller at the Daytona Bike Week in Florida was undoubtedly the frame. "We have completely remanufactured the upper tubes to lower the fly-line and thus the seat height of the R 18 B. We also redid the steering head and the triple clamps so that the caster fits despite the changed steering angle and so that the bike rides well," explains Fred Kodlin.

The result was the R 18 B HEAVY DUTY, a bike in typical Kodlin style. Viewed from the side, the fly-line drops sharply to the rear from the chopped windshield taken from the Original BMW Motorrad Accessories range and finally runs harmoniously into the side cases made by Kodlin out of glass fibre-reinforced plastic and the low rear end. From the top the R 18 B HEAVY DUTY is characterised by a strong waistline in the seat area and a flowing connection to the side cases.

Finally, the technical chassis highlight is an air suspension system at the front and rear, supported by a compressor placed barely visibly behind the left side case. This allows the R 18 B HEAVY DUTY to be lowered and raised in a fraction of a second. This is both as useful as it is spectacular: To park, lower the chassis, and it rests on hidden support points letting the bike crouch just a few centimetres above the asphalt, waiting for the next ride.

Extensive body modifications including winglets.

The Kodlin team also delved no less deeply into the subject of body construction for a good three months. A completely new sheet metal tank was created - longer than the original, flowing in shape and with indentations on the sides. The connection of the tank and rear frame was also modified for this purpose. The original mobile phone charging compartment, on the other hand, has been taken over from the R 18 B.

A front spoiler including a 3-colour underfloor lighting system – a popular feature, not only in Daytona - and a front mudguard are also



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made of sheet metal, the mudguard fitting snugly around the 21-inch front wheel. Finally, Kodlin created a corresponding counterpart for the rear wheel from two R 18 B rear mudguards joined together, in which the rear and side indicator lights are integrated in a very discreet manner. The two side covers made of sheet metal, which form a smooth transition to the side cases, are completely custom-made. Speaking of side cases: R 18 B loudspeakers by Marshall and an amplifier are fitted inside. Kodlin's attention to detail is also evident in the aluminium milled hinge panels of the cases in the style of the original R 18 B components.

The so-called winglets above the cylinders are another design element. They are also made of metal, but do not fulfil any function in the actual sense. Rather, they underline the design of the R 18 B HEAVY DUTY and make it appear unmistakable, especially when viewed from the front. The customizing job is rounded off by a seat made by Kodlin and an instrument cover with covers made of Alcantara and imitation leather, as well as specially made handlebars and a self-created exhaust system.

Elaborate paintwork by tattoo artist Marcel Sinnwell with ties to 100 years of BMW Motorrad.

Marcel Sinnwell has painted other Kodlin showbikes in the past, but now only rarely picks up a spray gun for very special jobs. For example, when he paints yachts or an R 18 B HEAVY DUTY.

For this project, the colour gradients were completely airbrushed with translucent paint. The inspiration for this was the mixing of colour pigments in the paint and especially the way they form streaks in the milky basecoat when first stirred. The result goes along very well with the Daytona bike week, where complex and colourful paint schemes are more than just good form.

Additional design touches on the R 18 B HEAVY DUTY are provided by hand-painted pinstripes and an airbrushed pattern on the rear mudguard that combines Kodlin and "100 years of BMW Motorrad". The brake callipers, gearshift and foot brake levers and footrests,



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however, are BMW Motorrad standard components that have been colour-matched.

BMW R 18 B: The perfect bike for customizing.

But Fred Kodlin by no means laid his hands on all the assemblies and parts. What was a particularly positive surprise for him: "The bolts. They are all made of stainless steel, with a nice Torx head. That's not the way it is on other bikes. The basic bike and especially the engine are very, very cleanly finished. All the electrical cables are already nicely hidden, so we didn't have to do anything to the engine," he explains.

For this reason, numerous R 18 B components were deliberately not replaced, but at most modified. For example, the shortened hand levers and handlebar end weights. Likewise, the engine remained unchanged from a technical point of view. Only the cylinder head covers, belt cover and intake snorkel were painted in metallic black.

Cruise control with distance control, reverse gear and eCall have remained unchanged. They are absolutely unique features of the BMW R 18 B in the Cruiser world, where these functions are not offered by any other manufacturer.

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In case of queries please contact:

Dominik Schaidnagel, Spokesperson BMW Motorrad
Telephone: +49-151-601-50181, Dominik.Schaidnagel@bmw.de

Tim Diehl-Thiele, Head of Communications BMW Motorrad
Telephone: +49-151-601-57505, Tim.Diehl-Thiele@bmw.de

Jens Lemon, Head of Communications MINI and BMW Motorrad
Telephone: +49-151-601-23635, Jens.Lemon@bmw.de

Internet: www.press.bmw.de
E-mail: presse@bmw.de

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